

Rallye

The Specialty Automobile Monthly

Complimentary

January, 1983



Inside—Mercedes Muscle Car, BMW 3.0 CS,
The Meteor, Test Drives: VW Rabbit GTI,
Mercedes 380 SEC

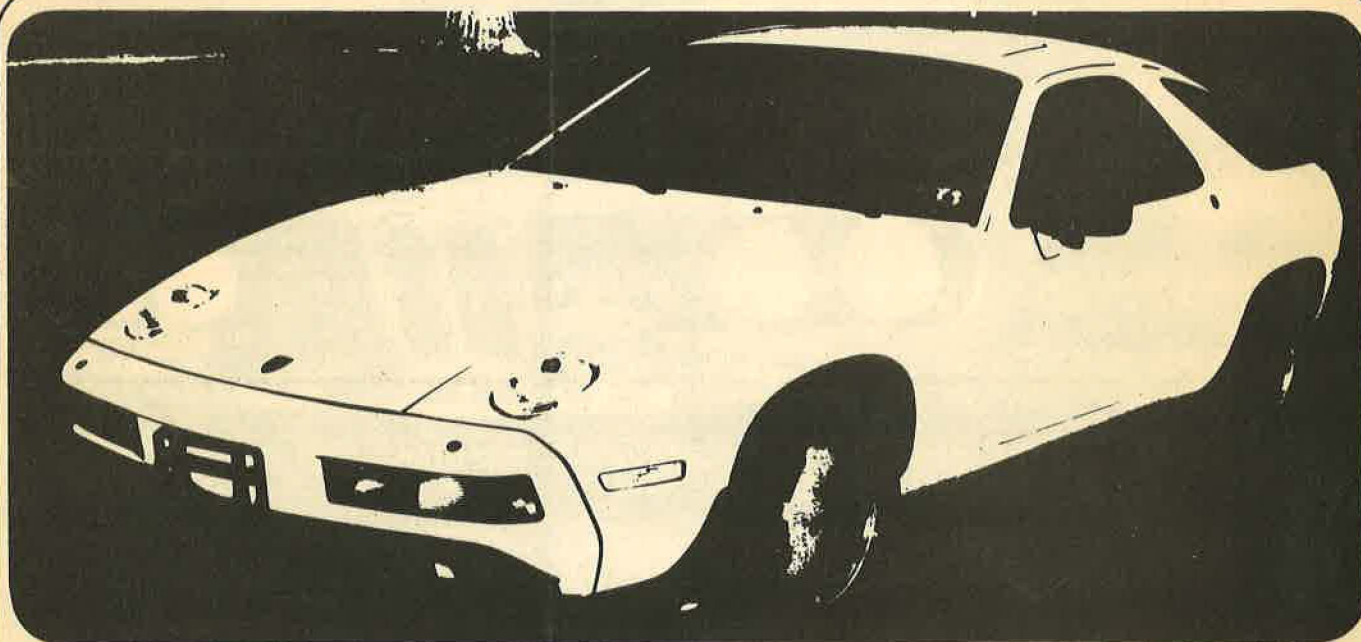
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Cover Car

This 1970 BMW 2800CS is owned by Geoff Keys and Guy Medeiros of Auto Technik in Boulder.

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Volume I, Number 3

My Trip to Germany

This month's issue has its roots in a trip I made to Germany last year during what has come to be called "Super Bowl Week," the last week in January. Besides discovering that missing the Super Bowl telecast is no great loss (for my money the Jets upset of the Colts in 1969 was the last exciting game), I learned a few things about German cars.

The first thing I noticed was that there weren't as many true German cars in the country as I had imagined. Ford, with their Opels, Capris, Escorts and other models, is putting up a good fight with the Germans on their home turf, and Saabs and Fiats are also abundant.

The Mercedes 240 D, considered a luxury family car in the United States, is the German counterpart of the Checker Marathon, and probably one of the reasons a taxi ride costs so much.



One of the highlights of my trip was getting lost in the huge Volkswagen plant on Hanover. I became separated from the small tour group and the one German phrase I had managed to master, "Ich spreche nur Englisch" (I speak only English), did not help me much when I tried to get directions back to the visitor area. I eventually found the tour group over by the Swedish-built robot that painted the Rabbits, Jettas, Vanagans, etc. The VW tour was a good one, and I recommend it to anyone planning on visiting Hanover. Next time I'll have to visit Stuttgart too.

RALLYE test drove two cars for this month's issue, The Volkswagen Rabbit GTI and the Mercedes 380SEC, and we plan to include new cars that seem to be headed towards this "specialty" category as well as older specialty cars in RALLYE test drives every month. Our aim with the test drive is to give our overall impressions of the car and test its performance on Colorado roads.

This month's Colorado Feature is on The Meteor and its creator, Dick Jones. I met Dick when I went over to his house in Arvada to pick up pictures of the first Meteor taken in 1954. Dick is an idea man

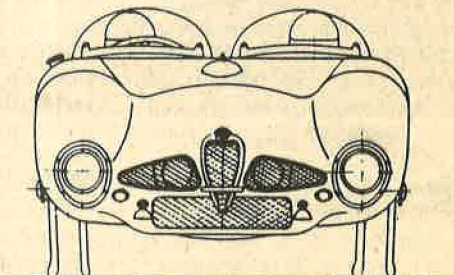
who as an engineer also has the ability to turn ideas into finished products. Although Dick says he was heavily influenced by the Italian designs of the same era, the Meteor is purely a Dick Jones creation, and the detailed design drafts in his file cabinet prove it. When I asked Dick what his plans were for 1983 he said that he plans to "invent and create a few things." How about the Meteor II, Dick?

—David Bingham

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Mercedes Muscle Car 300 SEL 6.3

By Joseph Troise

Alright, car lovers. Can you guess the identity of this mystery car? Here's a few hints: It has four doors, looks like it belongs in a retirement community, and if you floor it, it will suck birds out of the trees while pasting your eyelashes to your forehead.

Sorry, time's up! If you answered "The Mercedes 300 SEL 6.3," then you're one of the few automotive enthusiasts who remember the endearing qualities of this outstanding sedan.

The 6.3 was born when the body of the standard W 109 sedan was stuffed with the enormously powerful SOHC V-8 engine used in the mammoth Mercedes 600. Unlike other engine/body matings of this type (my apologies to the Sunbeam Tiger), the result was a well-balanced car that combined the understated elegance of a formal, stretched sedan with the performance of a Z-28 and the braking and handling of the best production sports cars of the period. All in all, the 6.3 was a near-perfect car for its time, and it afforded all fun-loving drivers who were fortunate enough to possess it the ability to indulge their every automotive fantasy. For instance, a quick twist of the wrist removed the "6.3" designation from the trunk, and with this little omission, plus maybe wearing a suit and jamming a pipe in your mouth, you put yourself squarely in the tradition of German *Q-ships* of old. Disguised as a hapless and innocent freighter, you could prowl the high seas, armed to the teeth and looking for trouble. But more of this in a minute.

Total production of the 6.3 was somewhat under 2,000 cars, and many of these ended up in the U.S. I saw my first one in 1969, at the Mercedes-Benz Training School in New Jersey. The school cadre wasted no time in testing and improving its performance. They fiddled with the Bosch timed-flow injection system (mechanical), the distributor, the heads and the rear-end gearing (stock ratio was 2.85), to the point where the performance was described to me as "frightening." You have to remember that right out of the box, unaltered, this car could turn 0 to 60 in just over 6 seconds, and over 90 MPH in the quarter mile. This was with two people, a full tank of gas, and an automatic transmission, putting its total weight at about 4,000 lbs.

Consider the potential performance with "improvements!"

I inquired about borrowing the car for a weekend, which was one of the privileges of the job I had at the time, i.e., having to explain to people why, on occasion, the Mercedes they paid lots of money for didn't start, or overheated, or manifested other ills that every machine is heir to. But my request met with some resistance. It seems that in the last few weeks members of the school or certain accomplices thereof had been generating the kind of publicity that Mercedes Benz does not like; specifically, the factory did not mind the idea of Mercedes having a "performance" image, but they did not like the idea of their most prestigious sedans winning trophies at the Westhampton drag strip.

Although the criminals were never actually identified, it was apparently true that somebody entered the 6.3 in a stock sedan class and mercilessly blew the doors off all competitors. After some quick figuring, the track officials decided that perhaps the Benz should not be racing 327 Chevelle station wagons, but rather larger-engined automatics, like Corvettes and Mopars. The slaughter continued, however, and the following week the Benz Bandits were presented with an ultimatum—either submit to a tear-down or race with cars of substantially better power/weight ratios, such as Shelby GT 350's, Z-28's, the hairiest of Corvettes, or if that didn't work, a Cobra 427. The boys in the Benz debated the situation. A tear-down was out of the question, not because anyone would discover anything, but due to the fact that the car was much too complicated to be disassembled by inexperienced personnel. It was generally agreed that the Shelby GT 350 could be beaten, and that the Z-28 could *maybe* be beaten. The Cobra however, was much too fast. So the 6.3 reluctantly retired from drag-racing, but not before the local press played upon the more amusing aspects of the story, which eventually got back to M-B public relations.

So the word from on high was to lend the 6.3 out judiciously, lest it tarnish the image of a very dignified company. After promising to behave, *in writing*, I was allowed to put my name on the waiting list. A few weeks later I got a call to come

on over to the school and pick up the dragster . . . er . . . automobile, that is.

Standard equipment on the 6.3 included leather seats, a/c, am/fm radio, 4-speed automatic, air suspension and a central locking system. This particular car also had an electric sunroof. My first impression as I entered highway traffic was that if I had the \$14,000 to buy this car, I could wallpaper my room with speeding tickets in about two weeks. Whereas one tends to get a bit white-knuckled at 100 MPH in most American cars, the Benz completely insulated the driver from the sensation of speed. I could easily lean over and pull out the cigarette lighter, light up, take a few puffs, and leisurely watch the blurred shapes of cars disappear in my rear view mirror. Stopping the car was equally anxiety-free, and with a few taps on the pedal, the power brakes gripped the 20mm-thick rotors surely and quietly. The air suspension prevented any nose-dive, and the M-B power steering gave a positive yet effortless feel. After about 15 minutes, I felt like there was *nothing* I couldn't do in this car. It was (and still is) able to give the driver a sense of power and control that is difficult to describe in words.

The 6.3's first feat of magic came on the West Side Highway in New York. For those of you who have never had the pleasure, this road compares quite favorably with the major thoroughfares of North Korea. It is a twisting, pot-holed minefield of calamity, able to send even the best handling cars flying off in unscheduled directions. The Benz, however, could not be intimidated, and it handled each gutted, bumpy turn with ease. Not even the legendary New York taxicabs could keep up. Even if I were not the fastest car on the road that night, I easily managed the fastest time for the course. Most remarkably, I was completely relaxed the entire time, which is not something one easily does on New York roadways.

I fully intended to adhere to the spirit, if not the letter of the agreement I had made that weekend, to not besmirch the M-B image by outrageous behavior, but by Saturday afternoon I had already committed a number of serious crimes.

My favorite trick was to kind of loaf along in the left lane of the Long Island Expressway. If a car approached cau-



tiously from the rear, I would politely move to the right and let it pass. If, however, some obnoxious twerp attempted to climb up my trunk lid, blinking his lights, I would gradually move to the right, but *not* slow down. As he tried to pass, I would gently press a little more on the gas. Most drivers caught on right away that they were being suckered, but that didn't stop them from making fools of themselves. I was prepared, after all, to go 130+ MPH, which is *not* something you really want to do in a stock Plymouth Road Runner.

My gamest opponent that day was a late 60's Jaguar XKE. Given enough room, he probably could have caught and passed me, but the 6.3's incredible acceleration discouraged him, and he quit at about 100 MPH. A few miles down the road, he followed me off the exit ramp, blinking his lights and motioning me to pull over. He turned out to be an older gent, English, and a licensed driver with the SCCA. What impressed him most about the M-B, he said, was not its actual performance, but rather the absence of any visual or auditory evidence that it was performing. There was very little noise on acceleration, and not much dip in the rear end when the gas was trounced. Adding to that mystique was my own relaxed posture as the driver. There was no need for me to hunch down and get beady-eyed at 100 MPH. The Benz did not require nervous tension, but rather calm attention.

The following day was not nearly so satisfying. I began to feel like the heavy-weight champ knocking down unworthy opponents, one after another. Of course I knew that there were faster cars on the road, but I hadn't met any so far and I didn't have the nerve to enter the Benz at the track. Besides, the car was starting to run a bit ragged from all the flogging I had given it, so I decided to become just another Sunday driver, as unnoticed and unfeared as Clark Kent on his way to the phone booth. There was a certain satisfaction in the 6.3's incredibly low profile. *Nobody knows but me*, I would think to myself as some little MG or sleek silver 'Vette roared past.

As a model line, the 300 SEL 6.3 finally fell into corporate disfavor, inasmuch as its appetite for fuel and complicated service procedures was not compatible with Mercedes' plans for more efficient automobiles in the 1970's. The Mercedes 450 SEL 6.9 of 1976 was a worthy replacement for the 6.3 Super Sedan, but it never captured the latter's ability to project sheer power. Throughout automotive history, very few production sedans have ever performed so well and with such grace.

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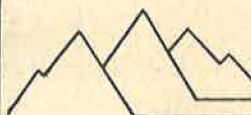


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Test Drive: VW Rabbit GTI

By Joe Troise

When I got the message that *Rallye* had called about doing a road test for the January issue, I immediately slipped on my Italian leather racing gloves and dialed the home office. Having got the wrong number four times in a row, I took off the gloves and tried again. I was understandably anxious, inasmuch as I had heard rumors that we were going to take a Porsche 944 for a spin "real soon," and maybe an old Maserati Mexico just for nostalgia's sake. I could hardly wait.

You can imagine my unconsolable despair when I was told to report to the local Volkswagen dealer. *Volkswagen*? What could *they* have that I would possibly want

to drive? "The new Rabbit GTI," I was told. "I don't like Volkswagens," I said tersely, as my mind brought back the horrors being trapped behind Volkswagen busses on numerous mountain passes. "Let me rephrase that," I said softly. "I hate them."

But *Rallye* went on to explain that the GTI was apparently something new and different and that I should be a bit more open-minded about these things. Finally, I relented. "O.K., I'll do it. But I won't like it, I promise you." I put my racing gloves back in the drawer and headed over to Boulder Valley Volkswagen, the dealer providing the test car.

Cliff Troxell, the VW Sales Manager, who looked and acted like he should be selling Rolls-Royce, led me to the GTI. It was done in black with a brown cloth interior, and seemed surprisingly handsome for a Rabbit. No dreary brown paint with that silly bunny on the trunk, and best of all, no garish marketing ploys like racing stripes or foot-high "GTI" lettering. My attention was immediately brought to the extra-wide tires and wheel-well flares. Hmm. Pirelli Cinturato P6's on 6.0 X 14 wheels. Very interesting.

After a quick indoctrination, I was on my way. One thing I liked right away were the Recaro-like front seats. I'm a pretty big

continued

fellow, actually, but I had to admit that the interior appointments on this Rabbit were far more plush and comfortable than I would have imagined. You may remember that the first Rabbits had passenger accommodations about as elegant as a medieval Motel 6.

As I left the dealer's parking lot, I had to edge into some thick, fast-moving traffic, so I gave the car a pretty good punch out of the driveway. Lo and behold, I heard the front tires chirp! I let up on the gas. Gravel or sand on the road, no doubt. For the next few minutes, I drove the car carefully, getting used to the shift gate, instrumentation, etc., as the engine warmed up. Two things I immediately noticed were that the five-speed gearbox ratios were very close and that the tachometer redlined at 6500 RPM.

After clearing traffic, I turned onto the Longmont Diagonal and let 'er rip. I wasn't expecting what came next. *Power!* This little devil could really move right along! The torque band seemed remarkably

wide and the smoothness of the engine was impressive. This was not one of those fast but nasty little cars that are occasionally produced in order to give a dull car better performance. This car seems balanced, well-thought out, very sophisticated for its type.

After violating the speed limit to my heart's content, (thanks to a bored-out 109 c.i.d. engine, some fancy headwork, 8.5 to 1 compression and a non-restrictive exhaust system), I swung back toward the mountains to try the car on some twisty roads. Heading up Sunshine Canyon, I cautiously threw the car into a few turns, waiting for that typical Rabbit understeer to scare the hell out of me. Nope, it was hardly there at all. I pushed the car harder, but it behaved as well as *anything* I've ever driven around a tight curve. Ruts, dips, loose gravel, you name it, the GTI loved it. I hated to admit it, but after about an hour's time, I was actually getting to like this car. Who would have thought it possible?

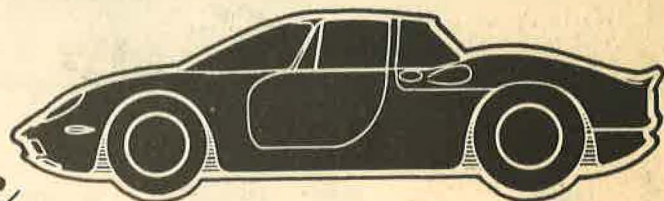
Coming back down the mountain at a more leisurely pace, I began to think how badly VW needed a car like this to give a boost to the sagging Rabbit image. VW sales have been very poor this past year, for a variety of reasons, one of which was the increasingly lackluster look and feel of the Rabbit. The car is, after all, an old design by current standards, and the Japanese have pressed hard in terms of design and price. The development of the GTI seemed like a shrewd move. It's *not* just a warmed-over Rabbit with fat tires. The car is something special, a thoroughbred, and compared to comparatively priced and sized automobiles, no other manufacturer has anything quite like it. There are, of course, faster cars to be had, and more spacious and comfortable ones, no doubt, but not for \$8,500.

Oh, by the way, I did a little informal acceleration test, and even with very liberal margins for error, I would suggest that BMW 320i, Saab Turbo, and new Trans Am owners watch out. I'm not kidding, either.

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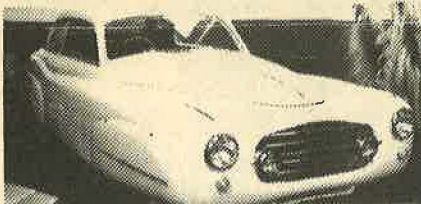
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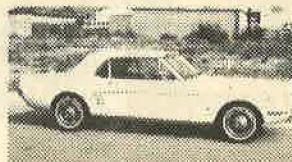
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Lotus Genius Dies

Colin Chapman, the versatile car designer and builder who founded Lotus Cars Ltd. and helped develop the DeLorean, died at 54 of a heart attack December 16th, leaving a legacy of automotive genius behind.

Chapman built the first racing car to have its engine and framework integrated with the body (later named monocoque design) and designed the modern "ground effects" race car, in which air flowing under the car sucks the racer to the ground, allowing for higher speed with excellent handling.

Lotus Formula One cars have won seven world championships since 1963, a record that is unmatched by any manufacturer. A Lotus, in the hands of the great Jim Clark, won the Indianapolis 500 in 1965.

Chapman dabbled in second-hand cars while he studied aeronautical engineering at London University, and eventually created the first registered Lotus by converting a 1930 Austin Seven into a race car. The Austin was reduced in weight greatly, and Chapman went on to become a pioneer in weight reduction techniques.

Among the production cars to come from Lotus were the Super Seven, Elite, Elan, Europa and the present models, the Elite, Sprint, and Esprit (of James Bond fame.)

Former finance director Fred Bushell has taken over as Chairman of Lotus, and by coincidence Lotus announced December 16th that Alan Curtis, the man credited with saving Aston Martin, had accepted Chapman's invitation to join the board of directors.

Lotus is about to re-enter the U.S. market in March with the 152 mph Turbo Esprit, priced at about \$48,000. Mr. Chapman's death is not expected to delay this introduction.

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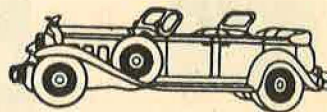
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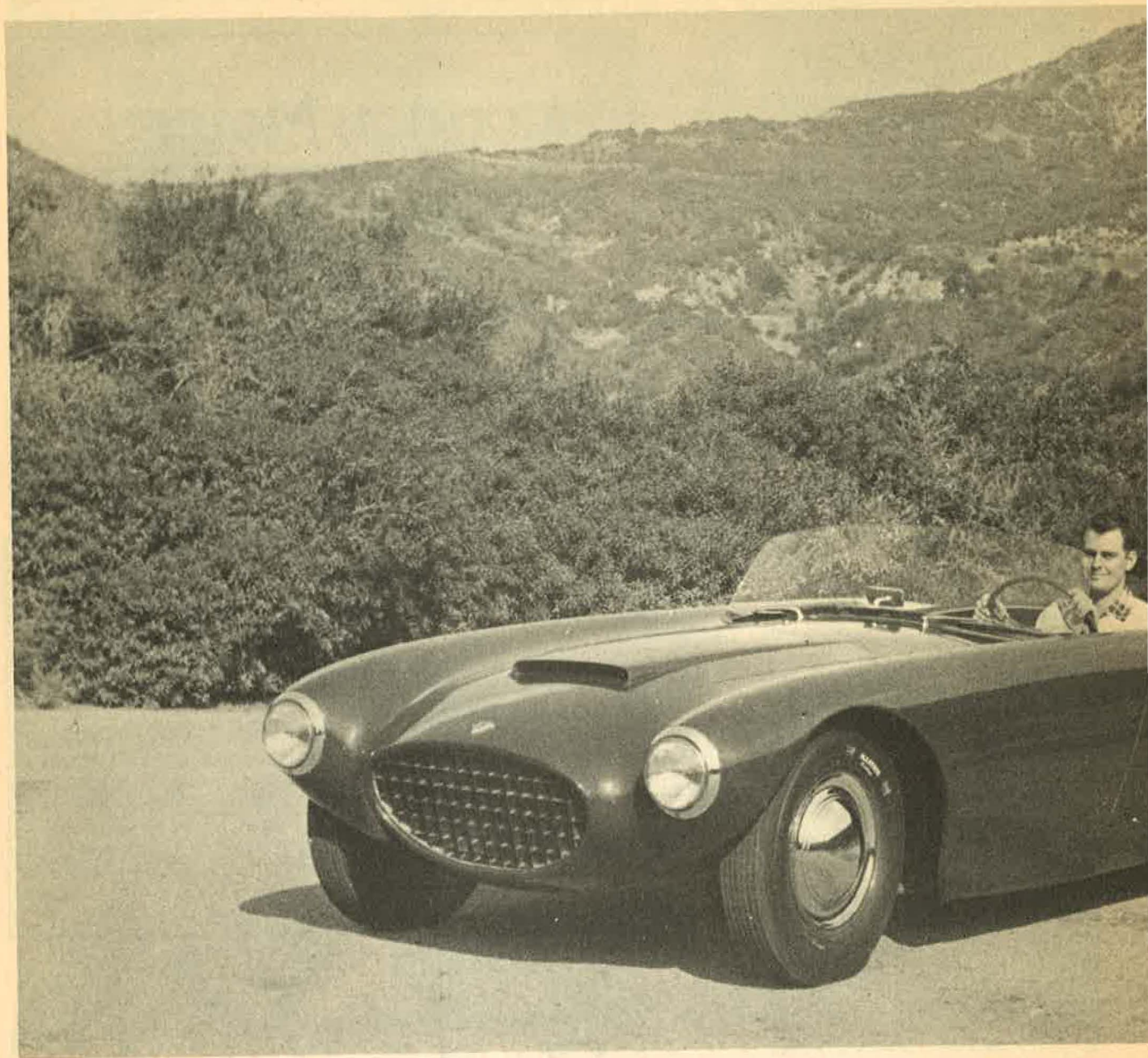
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Colorado Feature

By Chris Wolfe

Pity the poor restorer. After slaving away in the garage the car is done—the most perfectly restored Paragon Panther in the world. Now *everyone* knows that they only built one of these, so you will be the showstopper at the Concours at the Glenwood Rallye. You pull in the parking lot. Everyone comes rushing over to see the car. You're happy. Then the British Car Expert comes by to look at the car and says you don't have the correct fuel line clamps on the car so it is not a perfect Paragon Panther, even if it is the only one in the world. At the Concours the next day you get beat out by a Humber Super Snipe Sedan because it has the right fuel clamps. Catch 22 strikes again.

Dick Jones, the creator of the Meteor, has a very nice Porsche 914-6. He likes the car very much, but would like to make some changes to clean up the lines of the body, like filling in the front marker lights and flaring the fenders. But the Porsche people have convinced him not to change the car because too many 914-6's have been "improved" and the car is worth too much to change. The Corvair he has is the same way. So Dick is playing with a VW camper that is Corvair powered with all sorts of subtle changes that VW never even dreamed of when they built the car.

Jones has the last Meteor he built hanging in the rafters of his garage next to his VW; no expert is going to tell him that the car is correct or incorrect. Why? Because Jones designed and built it, that's why.

The Meteor was built by 1952 by Jones and his partner Jim Byers. The car was influenced by several sports cars, most notably the Ferraris by Vignale. Dick wanted a body that would "grab you by the balls when you looked at it," no small task, yet his body comes very close to doing that. Its lines are European inspired, but the finished product is distinctly American.

The Meteor was built on a cut down 39 Ford chassis. The wheelbase was 100 inches. The curb weight was 2050 pounds, fifty pounds shy of being perfect in balanced weight. Jones's first car had the venerable Ford flathead V-8 in it. When the Meteor was built in 1952 the flathead was in its zenith as the engine of the hot rod crowd; the car performed very well with the flathead. Dick sold the first car after moving to Colorado and the car was fitted with an Olds V-8. Later cars had the small block Chevy V-8's for power. The Ford running gear was very sturdy and at that time rather inexpensive. Jones's thoughts were this: "Why couldn't you take a car that had already depreciated, throw away the body, put a nice body on it and come up with something different that would handle and perform like the new cars for a fraction of the price?" Indeed, why not?

The bodies were made of Fiberglass. It took 2000 hours to build the first body and 16 hours for ones after. The bodies were very well detailed and constructed. Dick designed and built the hinges and hard-

METEOR

ware for the cars. "This is the problem for the average guy to build his own body. Finding hardware off the shelf that will work for his design." How true. Remember the Kelmark GT 40 kits that came as bare bodies, nothing but a poorly detailed set in "instructions"? Jones' cars were complete with hardware and glass with detailed instructions and chassis templates.

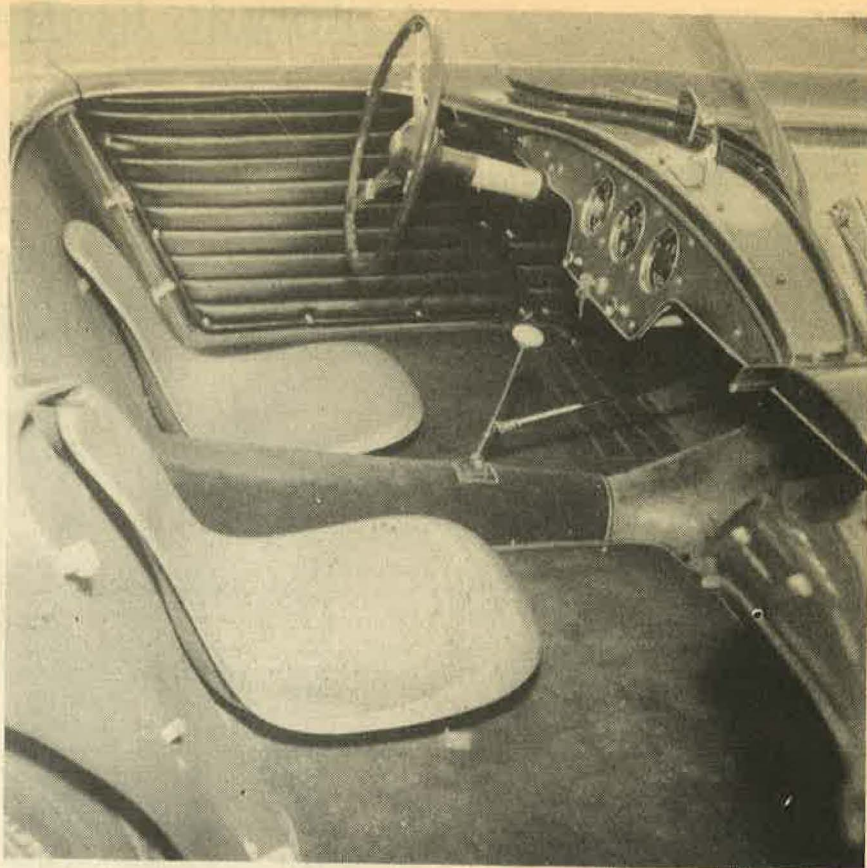
The first Meteor was displayed at the Motorama in L.A. in 1953. "The car was a rolling body. We had a tonneau cover on it because the steering wasn't hooked up and it had no interior. But it turned some heads." After completion the car was the Course Marshall's car at the 1954 Torrey Pines Road Race. When Jones moved his family to Colorado in 1955 he bought out Byers and after settling down went back to California and brought back the molds, which his brother Larry built a couple cars with, to a barn at about 90th & Federal in Lakewood. Shortly after his arrival reports of a "Phantom Ferrari" started to filter in. What looked like a Ferrari from the distance was actually Jones' Meteor. Bob Carnes was so impressed with the detailing of the bodies that he wanted Dick to build bodies for him and a sports car he had in mind. But Jones wasn't too keen on the idea and turned Bob down (Carnes later built his own car, the Bocar, but that is another story).

Jones' car was featured in *Road & Track* in 1955 and *Car Craft* in 1956. Hot Rod came out and did a photo essay on the building of the molds and the first cars. Jones wrote an excellent article to go with the photos, but by the time it was finished Hot Rod felt it was old hat. They gave him the negatives and a set of prints. The pictures for this article are from the Hot Rod session. They show how much work was involved in making a fiberglass car.

All told, Dick built about 25 cars from 1954 to 1962. He would do it all again, but would instead use an aluminum body for the mold. Says Jones, "The aluminum is much easier to change than the plaster molds. If you want a headrest on the plaster molds, you've got a big pile of plaster there. If you don't want it, you have to cut it off. Aluminum is much easier to shape. It is like a living material."

Jones' son, Ken, bought the Meteor that Jones' bother built in 1955 and drove it to high school in the Arvada area in the late '60s. "It was the fastest car in Arvada," Ken says. Ken sold the car two years ago to Roger Coffin, who is currently restoring the car.


The Meteor hanging in the garage is a 90 inch wheelbase car, rather than the 100 inch wheelbase of the other cars. When Jones finishes this car, the last Meteor, I want to be around when he takes it to the car show. Pity the poor "expert" who tells Dick that the hood release is wrong and therefore isn't an original Meteor. That should be interesting.



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Test Drive: Mercedes 380 SEC

When I decided to test drive a Mercedes-Benz I chose the 380 SEC because there just aren't that many of them floating around Colorado and because Lynn Madix of Thoroughbred Car Company in The Springs gave me the green light to take his top of the model line for a spin before he left for a Texas Christmas.

Before handing me the keys to the SEC Salesman Mitch Kindschi gave me a quick tour of Motor City in the car and showed me how the front seat electrically adjusts eight ways, how to shift the four-speed automatic transmission into low for passing or quick pick-up situations, and of course how to work the four-speaker Becker radio-cassette player. Mitch dropped himself back off at the dealership and recommend I head towards the less crowded roads near the Broadmoor Hotel to do my testing. He handed me the keys and said, "Have fun . . . and take care of 'er now."

Before taking off I played with the seat adjuster until the seat fit me perfectly in every way. As I drove away from Motor City I felt the sensation of having a lot of weight under me being thrust forward in too smooth and quiet a manner. At almost two tons the SEC is a substantial coupe and although the handling is excellent for a car of its size its sporty movement does not hide the feeling of protection from the outside world that characterizes Mercedes.

When I reached the Broadmoor I slowed the SEC down to speed limit because of the number of people walking around with flowers in their hands from a wedding or funeral that had apparently just taken place. The SEC fit in perfectly with this scene in the shadow of the opulent Broadmoor and the mountains behind it. As I cruised in front of the hotel I did not see one head turn to inspect the car.

As I headed up a steep grade I was disappointed with the acceleration I was receiving from the SEC's fuel-injected, 3.8 litre light alloy engine until I remembered to shift into low. This transmission bonus is actually a torque converter that quickly brought me up to forty miles per hour and then automatically shifted back into second. While the SEC did not jet up the mountain roads, it did provide a sure pace with no hesitation.

I found the SEC's tight steering (37 foot turning radius) to be quite handy for the sharp, un-Mercedes-like U-turn I pulled when I felt I had gotten high enough into the mountains to give the car a true handling test. Downhill steering turned out to be delightful, and without any traffic ahead of me I was able to drive faster than recommended and give the car every chance to falter and send me onto the gravel on the side of the road.

I was feeling very confident at the wheel when I reached the bottom of the mountains and I efficiently passed a few slow

movers on my way to the last testing ground: Interstate 25. Two pick-ups staged what I thought for awhile would be a 55 mph caravan to Pueblo until the guy in the left lane eased ahead slightly, allowing me to make my move. With an open road ahead of me I began to push the car up to 70 mph when something unexpected happened: the steering wheel began to shake slightly. Surely I'm hallucinating, I thought. Gimme back my 53 grand. In an attempt to the nightmare I kept pressure on the accelerator and the shaking quickly stopped. I held the SEC at its 85 mph redline for about a minute and was amazed at how quiet and calm the ride was at this speed. The moemntary shake was a product of lack of tire balance, not a flaw in the car. I felt very safe driving the SEC on I-25, and that's saying a lot.

Before heading back to the dealership I pulled the SEC over to the side of a frontage road and stepped out to view the car closely. The car looks sleek and with its 0.35 drag coefficient it certainly knifes through the air. The door handles and side mirrors even act as air foils.

The technology that went into building the 380 SEC provide superb ammenities, almost too many to mention. There are no apparent afterthoughts involved with the car and I'm sure that's just as Mercedes intended it.

— David Bingham

A Look at the Specialty Dealerships

The Auto Show

324 West Hampden Avenue, Englewood

Since The Auto Show opened in May of 1982 it has quickly become known as one of the classiest specialty car dealerships in Colorado. Owner Ed Cudahy's goal is to "work on a more personal level with the customer and to sell cars in pristine condition." Cudahy and Sales Manager Steve Perking put a premium on finding cars that fit into this "pristine" category rather than buying cars that may be easy to come by but don't quite make the grade, and to do this Cudahy travels throughout the U.S. to find cars.

Although the price of the cars at The Auto Show starts at \$5,000 for a fully restored Cougar, it is definitely a luxury dealership, and Cudahy reflects The Auto Show's image. Cudahy must surely be the best dressed car dealer in the area, and he accounts for his conservative taste in clothes to "hanging around too many prep schools."

Mercedes are the biggest sellers with Porsche "a close second" according to Perkins. Ferrari is one of Cudahy's favorite cars, and The Auto Show does a good deal of Ferrari dealing. The two Ferraris on the showroom floor were a 1980 308 turbo-charged GTS priced in the mid-forties and a 1960 250 PF coupe prototype that Cudahy hesitates to put a price tag on because it is a special car that he became attached to as he guided it through the restoration process. Perkins reports that he gets many calls from people asking for Ferrari and that The Auto Show "has quite a few on their way to the dealership."

Walter's Star Service

197 South Broadway, Denver

As Denver's largest Mercedes repair center, Walter's Star Service fixes many cars that are either for sale or about ready to be traded in by their owners for the new Mercedes. What Walter Martini has done is to intercept some of his customers and buy their cars. According to Star Service Sales Manager Tim Marriot the advantage to buying a Mercedes from him is that he has three factory-trained mechanics ready to schedule you on the top of the list if the car should ever need repair. This perk is called "customer service preference."

Mercedes for sale included a 1981 300SD Turbo Deisel, a 450SL convertible that sold new for about \$13,000 and now costs \$22,000, and an ivory 1957 220S convertible in excellent restored condition for about \$40,000.

Valley Motors

4550 South Broadway, Englewood

"Sorry, we speak German here," Jim Bahne says to the man on the phone trying to sell him a Datsun 280ZX. Actually, Bahne doesn't speak a word of German, he just sells a lot of Mercedes-Benz.

Bahne and his father-partner Bob have had the dealership for five years and have twenty to twenty-five Mercedes available a month on their lot. Bahne also has some Porsches available, but the best sellers are the 1970-78 Mercedes. "The cars in this group have the best re-sale, and they appeal to middle-income groups," says Bahne. Most of the cars on the lot fit into the \$6,000 to \$20,000 range.

In addition to car sales Bahne has a "very aggressive" leasing program available that is geared towards eventual full ownership of the car. Bahne attributes some of the success of his leasing program to the new awareness of tax benefits in leasing.

The Autohaus, Ltd.

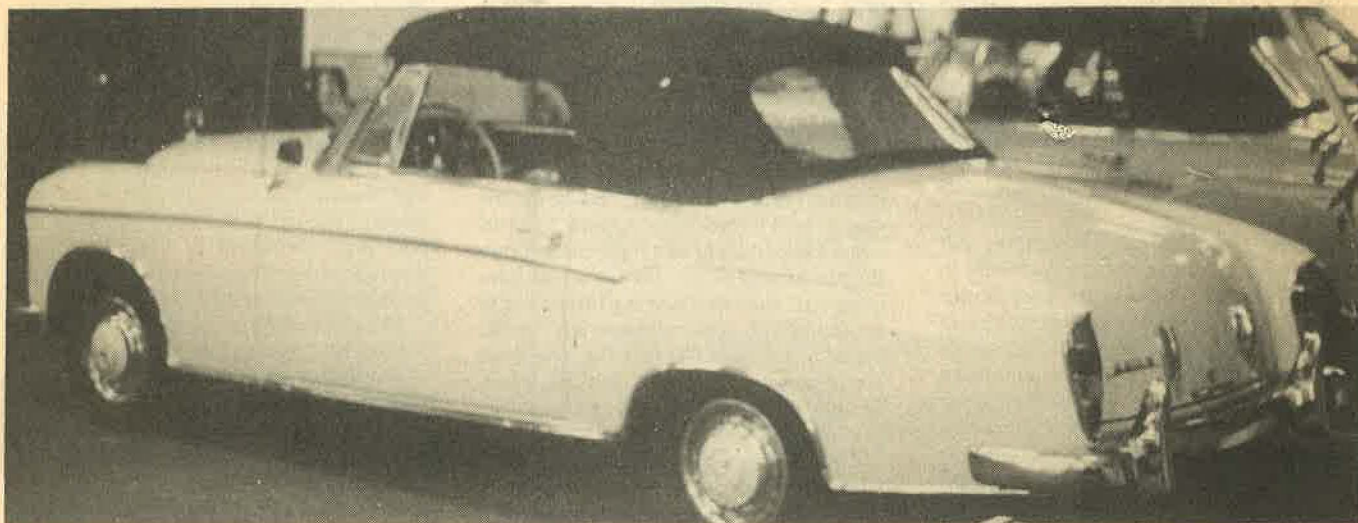
3500 South Inca, Englewood

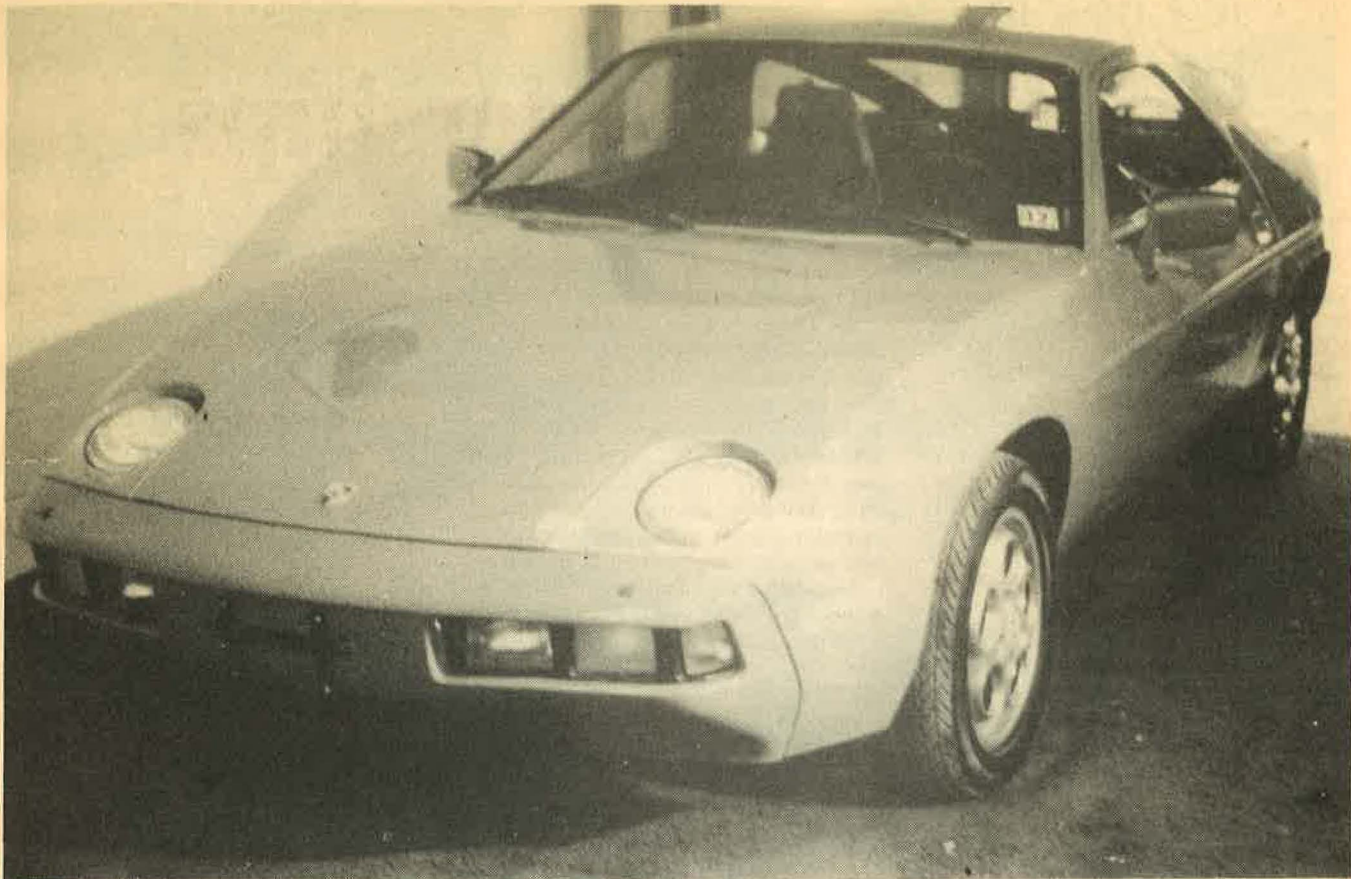
What used to be the large Holmes International dealership has now become the very large Autohaus Ltd. Owners Jack Moller and John Dekker have moved from a relatively large showroom at 3600 Galapago Street in Englewood to a huge building a few blocks away. The new Autohaus site has 14,000 square feet of inside showroom space, or about twice as much room as any other specialty dealership in the area.

With an additional 15,000 square feet of room outside the building, there is a lot of room for cars, and Moller and Dekker have the cars. About 60% of the cars at the Autohaus are German, and the Mercedes and Porsches look impressive lined up in rows.

Moller is currently building a sales team to help find "distinctive automobiles" for people. According to Moller, the ability to find a particular model Ferrari, Rolls-Royce, etc. is one of the factors behind their rapid growth.

All the cars at The Autohaus are serviced by their own mechanics at the dealership's second location at 2001 South Dahlia in Denver, and interior and exterior detailing is done there as well.





The Porsche 928 is a favorite at the auto show.



A line up of Porsches at the Autohaus.



Direct From Germany

A Look at the Importers

If you're in the market for a classic European car, Markus Schliessler may be able to find just the make and model you're looking for. Since he began importing cars from Germany in 1978, the 29-year-old, German-born Boulder resident has developed a network of individuals throughout Europe to help him find fine cars. In May of 1982 Schliessler incorporated under the name of Maxmar.

Schliessler flies several times a year to Maxmar's European headquarters near Heidelberg, West Germany to coordinate the transport of cars headed to the U.S. If necessary, the cars are modified to meet E.P.A. and D.O.T. standards before either being flown from Cologne or Frankfurt or shipped in containers to points in North America. Schliessler, who is fluent in German, English and French, and retains a mild German accent, has negotiated cost-efficient and trouble-free transportation for his cars with several airlines and brokerage firms, and he of course keeps the names of all his contacts as trade secrets.

Maxmar's biggest selling make is Mercedes, with the 1964-71 coupes and convertibles being the most asked for models. Schliessler is fond of these models because of their hand-made bodies and interior

detailing with wood and leather. 230, 250 and 280SL roadster convertibles along with the 190SL and rare 300SL and 300SL Gullwings are also available, and Schliessler stresses that he can find virtually any pre-1968 model Lamborghini, Ferrari, Rolls Royce, Maserati, Aston Martin, Porsche, Citroen or Vanden Plas.

Maxmar also offers a buy-drive and fly service for vacationers who want to enjoy their cars during their stay in Europe, and Schliessler, a pilot himself, also sells American built corporate aircraft to companies in West Germany.

At 56, retired TWA pilot Hienrich Rupp of Aurora, Weisbaden, West Germany Riyadh, Saudi Arabia does not live a retired lifestyle. Rupp "arranges for the importation of Mercedes-Benz to the United States," in addition to his part-time job as pilot for a Saudi Prince.

Rupp's role is simply that of buyer and transporter. Through broker lists and other contacts Rupp receives orders for cars and then travels to Europe to find and buy the cars. The cars are then brought to a Daimler-Benz sanctioned conversion center where they are federalized to meet U.S.

standards. The location of this 75-year-old, 300 man conversion factory is one of Rupp's trade secrets.

Rupp handles the 500 series Mercedes (the SEC, SL and SEL) almost exclusively, and finds many of his orders coming from new Mercedes dealers who have buyers for the 500s but of course can't get them through Mercedes because Mercedes does not bring them into the United States. The price of a 500 through Rupp's system is about 104,000 marks, or \$45,000, and Rupp maintains that he does not bring over any "bootleg" cars.

The method of transporting the cars from Germany to the United States is up to the customer, and according to Rupp, the main factor in choosing either to fly or ship the car is time. Those cars that are shipped are put in containers and handled by people employed by Rupp when they arrive in New York. All cars are brought to a storage area in New Jersey where the buyers then arrange to have the cars delivered.

As a member of the Mercedes-Benz Club of America, Rupp is active in the Mile-Hi chapter of the club and is often asked to display cars from his personal collection in local auto shows. Three 300SL Gull-Wings highlight the collection.

—David Bingham



Three Maxmar Mercedes at a castle in Germany.



Car Books

By Joseph Troise

Cars With Personalities, by John A. Conde, Arnold-Porter Publishing Co., Box 64 6 Keego Harbor, Mich. 48033, 256 pp., 573 photos, \$21.95 postpaid.

No, there's no mistake in the heading. There really are 573 photos in this book, most of them quite rare and all of them interesting in some way.

John Conde may be familiar to some of you as former curator of transportation at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan, but his career as an automotive historian goes back to 1945, when he first joined Nash-Kelvinator. His book reflects a very thorough grasp of automotive history, and I am very much in favor of his choice to portray this history through photographs rather than reams and reams of prose. Each photo is, however, extensively captioned, allowing readers to learn something new every time they pause at a picture that catches the eye.

The idea of grouping interesting automobiles with their famous or once-famous owners has always appealed to me. The history of automobiles is far less significant if it is not woven into the lives of the people who drove them and into the culture that produced them. All too often, automotive books are histories of machinery. Quite frankly, one gets a bit tired of that. But to see Laurel and Hardy alive once again in their 1930 Buick, or Richard Nixon in an Edsel (It's true, it's true! See page 236 if you don't believe me!) never ceases to be entertaining.

If I may get a bit philosophical for a moment, I would like to mention that after paging through *Cars With Personalities* for an hour or so, I suddenly became aware that I was not only looking at cars of the past, but also people whose names no longer carry the fame so many of them sought and temporarily won. Hollywood stars that not one person in 10,000 would remember today, sports heroes and politicians now fallen into complete obscurity, — many are victims of a cruel but fascinating irony—their automobiles have far outlived them. It makes me wonder if people looking at some exotic 1960's convertible in the year 2060 will even remember who Elvis Presley was, or Steve McQueen or Senator So-and-So? One couldn't say for sure, but I bet that car will still draw substantial numbers of admirers.

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BMW 3.0CS and CSi

By Joe White

The BMW CS coupe was originally introduced in 1966. At that time it had a 2 liter four cylinder engine, drum brakes at the rear, and, curiously, a very narrow rear track. The body had a tall greenhouse with lots of glass, typical of BMW design at the time, and a singularly ugly front end, not so typical.

Over the following years improvements were few and slow in coming, almost as though the engineers were reluctant to work on the car. But improvements were made. The most noteworthy were the installation of the 2.8 liter six cylinder engine from the sedans and the addition of new front sheet metal. The rear brakes were still drums, but the car looked and accelerated much better.

By 1971 the model was being taken more seriously. In that year engine displacement was increased to 3 liters, four wheel vented disk brakes were used, and two versions were available; the 3.0 CS and 3.0 CSi.

The 3.0 CS was a grand touring machine designed for long, fast runs down the autobahns. The interior was finished in cloth or, optionally, leather and the front seats were adjustable for rake as well as fore and aft location. Directly behind the larger three spoke steering wheel was the instrument binnacle containing a tachometer, speedometer, gauges for coolant temperature and fuel level, and a clock. Oil pressure and alternator output were indicated by warning lights. A center console contained the controls for the heating and air conditioning system and the switches for the electric window lifts. Real wood

veneer was used to keep the interior from being too austere. The trunk was large enough, 14.5 cubic feet, to hold the required luggage for a prolonged trip. Included as standard equipment was a very complete tool kit in a tray that folded down from the trunk lid.

The engine was a single overhead cam design with a bore of 89 mm and a stroke of 80 mm for a displacement of 1985 cc. With two Zenith 35/40 carburetors and a 9.0:1 compression ratio the engine produced 180 DIN horsepower at 6000 rpm. The gearbox was a four speed manual with ratios of 3.855 in first, 2.202 in second, 1.401 in third, 1.0 in fourth, and 4.3 in reverse. An automatic transmission was optional. The final drive ratio was 3.45:1.

The car sat on a wheelbase of 103.3 inches. The suspension consisted of MacPherson struts, coil springs, and an anti-roll bar in the front; semi-trailing arms, coil springs, and an anti-roll bar in the rear. Wheels were 6J x 14 aluminum alloy with 195/70 VR 14 tires.

The 3.0 CSi was produced as a high performance version of the CS. The engine used Bosch electronic fuel injection and a 9.5:1 compression ratio to produce 200 DIN horsepower at 5500 rpm. The rear axle ratio was also changed to 3.25:1. There was no automatic transmission available for this model.

In 1973 BMW built the CSL. The CSL was produced in small numbers in order to homologate an over 3000 cc engine and special body panels (front and rear spoilers and aluminum doors, hood, and trunk lid) for Group 2 racing events.

The only model officially imported into the U.S. was a detuned version of the 3.0 CS. Two especially interesting 3.0 CSs can be found at Guy Medeiros' Auto Technik BMW shop in Boulder.

Guy's personal car is a unique 1973 CS with the trim and spoilers from a CSL. The car is painted black, presenting a subdued background for the special CSL wheel arch and body trim. There is no front bumper, instead an air dam drops straight down from the lower front valence panel. A small rear spoiler is attached to the trailing edge of the trunk.

The car's interior has also been slightly altered. Two leather covered Scheel seats have replaced the BMW front seats. The normal CS steering wheel has been replaced with a much smaller Fittipaldi leather covered wheel. Additional VDO gauges are mounted in the center console.

The engine now has two Weber 36/38 DOA carburetors mounted on the CS intake manifold. A Stahl header and sprint exhaust system have replaced the original system. The gearbox is a Gertrag five speed.

Suspension modifications consist of Bilstein strut inserts in the front and tube shocks in the rear. Oversize adjustable anti-roll bars are mounted at the front and rear. The BBS alloy wheels and Pirelli P6 tires have been temporarily replaced with steel wheels and snow tires.

The other car at Guy's shop, in to be reconditioned for the street, is a red Alpina modified racing CS. (Alpina is a company separate from BMW that builds the cars

continued

BMW races. They also produce a line of accessories for the enthusiast's car.) This car is one of five built in 1972 for the European Touring Coupe racing series for 3 liter cars. It also has a front air dam instead of a bumper and a rear spoiler on the trunk. Special fiberglass fender flares give the car a coke bottle shape and provide the necessary width to cover the ten inch wide racing wheels.

The wheels are special Alpina three piece racing wheels, size 10 x 14. The centers are cast magnesium and the rims are polished aluminum. 245/60 VR 14 Pirelli CN 36 tires are mounted onto the wheels.

The other suspension modifications consist of Bilstein strut inserts and shocks, adjustable oversize anti-roll bars, and a reinforced rear subframe.

The engine in this car is a detuned racing engine. It has three twin choke 45 DCOE Weber carburetors, a Stahl header, and a cam with more lift and duration. The rotating parts of the engine have been lightened and balanced. The standard CS four speed gearbox transmits power to the rear axle.

So, what is it like to drive a ten year old car such as one of these two?

Guy's car is a genuine pleasure to drive. All around visibility is excellent and the Schöel seat provides near perfect support. The small Fittipaldi leather covered steering wheel is very comfortable and provides indents for the driver's hands at the correct 3 and 9 o'clock positions. The power steering provides good feedback without being too heavy, which could be especially noticeable with the small diameter steering wheel.

The Gertrag five speed gearbox is not as precise as the rest of the car. The shifting feels vague and requires some practice in order to be sure of the shift pattern. When accelerating from a stop, first gear seems too short and as a result the car doesn't feel very quick off the line. But in second or third the engine's power can really be felt coming on.

The winter roads around Boulder are not the best on which to get an impression of a sport car's handling capabilities. The ridges and islands of ice in the streets provide a suspension test track designed to find a car's weak points. However, this ten year old car took on the obstacles with hardly a groan or squeak. The suspension is firm without being harsh and proved capable of absorbing the bumps without upsetting the car's balance. When cornering, the car remained flat, exhibiting very little body roll. The suspension modifications coupled with the long wheelbase provide a very stable ride.

The 3.0 CS series was built from 1971 through 1975 producing 11063 CSs, 8199 CSIs, and in 1973 only 1039 CSLs. The performance and quality of the CS coupes makes them desirable, but these numbers ensure their exclusiveness.

"The Rich Will Never Desert Us"

By Joseph Troise

"The Rich Will Never Desert Us." The gentlemen of Rolls Royce Motors, Ltd., Crewe, Cheshire, have believed in those words for a long, long, time. As the company approaches its 80th birthday, however, we find the Grim Reaper is auto shopping once again, and may be tapping RR on the shoulder, in complete disregard, as usual, of the desires of the well-to-do.

While the fall of Checker Motors and the DeLorean came as no real surprise, it is disquieting to learn that Rolls Royce is discreetly laying off workers as sales plummet. It is by no means the End of the Road, but one can easily appreciate Rolls' dilemma. Even at a cost of over \$100,000, a new Rolls no longer offers the commanding prestige, state-of-the-art technology and unsurpassed levels of comfort that the rich have come to expect. For sheer durability, a Cadillac is probably its equal; for comfortable, high-speed motoring, and for tasteful prestige, Mercedes-Benz is

clearly superior. This leaves the company with precious little to sell at such astronomical prices, unless it can convince enough people that buying a legend is a good investment.

It seems appropriate to mention the shaky condition of Rolls Royce in an issue devoted to the German automobile, for the two subjects are closely related. One has suffered at the hands of the other's success. This brings the demise of Packard to mind, a situation partly brought about by the dominance of Cadillac in the prestige market. Unlike Rolls, however, Packard went out in a blaze of technological excellence and desperate marketing maneuvers. Rolls seems content, at least at this point, to stand firmly in the traditions of the past and wait out the storm. With its limited resources, perhaps there is no other choice.

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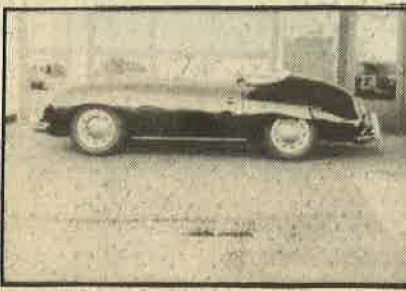
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